



Better Information and Quicker Decisions for Upper Kittitas Water Budget Neutral Applicants

Lean progress report: August 28, 2012

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Event Date	November 2010		
Background	<p>Ken Slattery and Maia Bellon started gearing up for the 2011 legislative session and began the Lean journey with Water Resources Program Staff at our Central Regional Office in early November 2010. The Kittitas water budget neutral work was a pilot Lean event. The Water Budget Neutral (WBN) process was selected because it was a new and ad hoc process created in response to adoption of WAC 173-539A in July 2009.</p> <p>Water Budget Neutral is defined as “an appropriation or project where withdrawals of public ground water are proposed in exchange for placement of other water rights into the trust water right program that are at least equivalent to the amount of consumptive use.”</p>		
Project Objective(s)	<p>The team invested one day analyzing WBN application processing for the Upper Kittitas County Ground Water Rule (WAC 173-539A). Three goals were identified:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reduce the number of days to process a WBN application. • Provide WBN applicants information to manage expectations within areas Ecology identified as potentially suitable (“yellow zones”). • Obtain Ecology management support, reduce employee stress, and resolve workload issues related to WBN processing and WAC 173-539A (non-process improvements). 		
Value Stream Mapping Outcome	Current Situation (Old Way)	Future (New Way)	Benefits
	Not enough information accessible to the public regarding the Water Budget Neutral requests, which would generate excessive phone inquiries to staff.	Designed a website on Ecology’s internet site (Kittitas Water Exchange) to share WBN processing information with external customers including performance tracking, pending application status, and definitions of process steps.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provides public information related to WBN applications • Reduces staff time spent on phone calls • Reduces employee stress so they can focus on core WBN processing work
	Every time we needed to formally communicate to WBN applicants, Central Regional Office Water Resources (CRO-WR) staff prepared letters from scratch, a time intensive process.	Prepared form letters in common topic areas allowing us to more quickly communicate with applicants.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reduces staff time spent on generating letters • Reduces employee stress so they can focus on core WBN processing work
	Water Right Tracking System (WRTS) did not meet the needs of WBN applications. Staff were tracking data in a separate spreadsheet or on paper hard copies.	WR IT section provided additional WRTS database tracking codes allowing CRO-WR staff to quickly query for WBN applications and decisions.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Centralized data

Activities to Implement Future State



Completed

- Approximately 24 WR staff received Lean Methods training hosted by Department of Personnel (DOP) in November & December of 2010.
- Realigned Water Transfer Working Group (WTWG) process, completing hydrogeology work and get fish input prior to WTWG – eliminating unknowns and the need to revisit WTWG multiple times.
- Utilize WR-HQ staff to measure stream flow during critical low flow months (Sept & Oct) and perform basic fish surveys in Upper Kittitas tributaries where data is lacking. This information is critical in analyzing a WBN application and the ability to utilize the US Bureau of Reclamation(USBR)/Ecology storage contract as a mitigation tool.
- Communication strategy launched to manage applicant expectations. There is a webpage designated for Kittitas Water Banking, which speaks to Ecology's performance, individual water bank information, and general WBN processing information. See http://www.ecy.wa.gov/programs/wr/cro/wb_trac.html
- The first general permits for the Swauk Basin (pilot subbasin) issued in June 2012. This concept is new to water resources and is seemingly a success. The water right general permit was issued to the Roan (Swauk Basin) Water Bank who will service future customers vs. individuals submitting WBN applications to Ecology. More information is available at: <http://www.ecy.wa.gov/programs/wr/cro/sbwb.html>

In Progress

- Check in with staff frequently to stay atop of WBN workload management to reduce staff burn-out and stress related to external performance expectations.

Under Development

- Develop a process that is understandable and efficient in navigating the options under the United States Bureau of Reclamation (USBR)/Ecology storage contract (mitigation tool). Ecology successfully completed Endangered Species Act (ESA) Consultation with the USBR in 2011. Bob Barwin and Melissa Downes are in the process of documenting this process, to streamline future ESA consultation requests. ESA consultation is only one option under the USBR/Ecology contract. Once we have completed this documentation, we will work streamlining the next option under the contract.

Results to Date

Yearly Averages for Suncadia WBN Applications		
	Number of business days to process application (days)	
	green zone (an area of suitable mitigation)	yellow zone (an area of potentially suitable mitigation, need more info)
2010	11.1	110.9
2011	13.2	109.0
2012	26.3	100.8
rolling ave 2010-2012	12.6	110.1

- There has been an increase in the volume of yellow zone applications over time. We are finally starting to see the processing times on yellow WBN applications decreasing since the program started in April 2010.
- There has been a decrease in the volume of green zone applications over time. Fewer values in the data set along with a bigger focus on long pending yellow applications translates to a larger change (increase) in green zone application processing time.

